Letters to the editor
Washington Post
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2/5/89

Like old soldiers, old spooks never die. They hang around forever trying to defend the disasters and catastrophes they fashioned in the name of national security while actually seeking to advance ideologies then already outdated.

This is illustrated by Ray Cline's "The Cuban Crisis Revisited," which is more accurately stated as the Cuban Crisis Revised.

That "nuclear war semed remote" to him is incredible because virtually all of them President Kennedy's top advisers pressed immediate military action on him from all the contemporaneous accounts of his advisers.

What Cline and all other commentators never refer to was in fact Khruschev's reason ~~trigger~~ for placing those missles in Cuba. It is not surprising that Cline ignores this because he also misrepresent the time ~~JFK was first aware of~~ the CIA had first proof of the presence of these missles in Cuba. It has always been the official CIA line that this was not until October 14, 1962 when in fact it was much earlier and after that crisis, the colonel/photoanalyst was decorated for his discovery of this proof.

It was no secret in 1962 that the CIA was plotting another adventure against Cuba, as was recently confirmed by FOIA disclosures to Scott Armstrong. After the CIA's Bay of Pigs fiasco, which JFK inherited from the Eisenhower administration, the USSR signed a mutual-assistance pact with Cuba, just as we have such pacts with countries that can't really contribute to our defense at all.

Aware of the new plans to invade Cuba, Castro invoked this pact, ultimately sending a delegation headed by his brother Raul and including Che Guevara to ask Khruschev how he was going to defend Cuba against a new United States invasion. How, indeed, was he?

There was and there is no way anyone can prevent an invasion of Cuba. But if Khruschev did nothing, it meant that treaties with the USSR were worthless and he was a paper tiger. In placing the missles in Cuba Khruschev gave Kennedy his own tiger to

ride, the working title of a book I researched than and have not been able to write since. He passed the war or peace decision over to the United States, which planned the second invasion of the Cuba Khruschev was pledged to prevent.

Cline's self-serving imterpretation, consistent with the ideology behind all those spook insanities that did bring us to the brink of annihilation, is that "Khruschev visualized a major change in the balance of world power as a result of having 84" missle close to and aimed at us.

Unless and until armed those 84 missles were only provocative sitting ducks. They could not be put to if intended for any offense use. But they not only were not armed - the USSR went to some trouble to establish that they were not armed. As Cline himself put it and as I recall from the time of the crisis, there was never any evidence of so much as a single warhead in Cuba. Without them 84 missles are worthless - except as provocation or to promote thought.

"Our massive photoreconnaisance never revealed any evidence of warheads being shipped or being present," Cline says. He reflects the exact opposite of his claim that Khruschev sought "a major change in the balance of world power" in acknolwedging that the USSR loafed on the job: there was "a surprisingly leisurely assembly of the weapons and a stretched-out timetable for operational readiness."

With these two observations alone Cline refutes his and the CIA's dangerous nonsense substituted for analysis of Khruschev's real objectives in placing those missles 90 miles away from us.

There was only one way in which Khruschev could meet his mutual-assistance pact obligations to Cuba when if he did not meet them the USSR becomes an international laughingstock and the symbol of puerility. That was by forcing the decision on war or peace on JFK and there was only one way he could do that, by displaying missles in Cuba. He could go to war with the United States in defense of Cuba but that would not defend Cuba and it would have devastated Cuba. Ultimately and despite the very bad advice pressed upon him, Kennedy saw this and on his brother Robert's advice he added to Khruschev's initial demand, that we promise not to invade Cuba, the guarantee that we

would prevent any invasion of Cuba- by anybody.

Kennedy gave Cuba protection Khrushchev had contracted but could not deliver.

The two leaders then grew close in a common quest for the peace ~~that~~ neither lived long enough to bring about.

It is past time for advisers and commentators to recall Santayana's wisdom, that those who do not learn from the past are doomed to relive it.

One such crisis ought be too much for the world to hope to survive.

Harold Weisberg

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Dear Editor,

Please excuse my typing and I realize that what I intended as a letter grew too long. I send it anyway. Perhaps it may inform you. I lived through that and it was not all that long after I'd been an intelligence analyst. On Latin America, too.

Retyping this would not help. I'm recovering from surgery on my better eye.

It may interest you to know that the afternoon of the second Wednesday of that crisis I discussed this contemporaneous analysis with the Post's then foreign editor and a former colleague in Latin America intelligence, then manager of the National Symphony. Your former foreign editor told me that the Post had reached and then abandoned this same analysis.

The decoration of the photoanalyst who detected the presence of those missles was a closely-held secret - until he was decorated for it! If the Post has Elie Abel's book on that crisis in its library it quotes the release on that decoration.

This means that the CIA knew of the presence of those USSR missles and withheld knowledge of it from JFK until the installations were closer to completion. Scary ?or!

If I recall correctly, the photoanalyst's name was Wright. He was a colonel.

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